Applegate Valley Historical Society
15050 Hwy 238
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Applegate, Oregon 97530

September 2000

WAY BACK WHEN

As we go sailing along through life, time flies by so swiftly that we find it quite difficult to accept the ides that fifty years is long enough to keep memorabilia or the data of events beyond that time. Yet this is what I discovered when I wanted to tell about the gladiolus festival we used to have in Grants Pass at the peak of blossom time for "glads." Twenty-eight growers were growing glads in Josephine County in 1927.

Thanks to the Jackson County Library system we did glean some statistics to quote.

"The Grants Pass Glad Show" originated in 1936 when a group of growers held a small show in the showroom of the garage owned by C.A. Winetrout where he sold mostly Ford cars. This was meant to be a showing for commercial growers only. The public was invited in, and plans were begun to make it an annual affair.

"By then this area was said to be one of the world's largest producing districts of the bulbs. Flowers from Josephine County's 'world famous' fields contributed their brightest and largest specimens to compete in the first annual festival and those following. Throughout the county fields of the blossoms made bright and spectacular patterns over the landscape for many who had never before viewed flowers by the acre."

The Cavemen, who were indeed a show unto themselves, got in on the act and opened the publicity drive by sponsoring the preparation of more than nine hundred small "gift" boxes of bulbs and several thousand printed invitations which could be mailed free all over the United States.

"y the second show in 1937 a Queen and her court were chosen to reign officially over the event. The first Queen was Miss Shirley Riebel. Her full length portrait appeared on the front page of the second section of the Grants Pass *Daily Courier* for August 18,1937. She was given the title of 'Gladys I, Queen of Joyous Josephine and Glad Grants Pass.' There were also pageboys and knights in attendance. By 1952, the 'Order of Royal Gladiolians' was organized as a sponsoring group. One candidate for Queen was chosen to represent Rogue River, one from Illinois Valley, one from Glendale and four from Grants Pass High School.

"The Royal Gladiolians was composed of one hundred business and professional men who marched in the parade, planned and served as escorts for the coronation ceremonies and sponsored a coronation ball."

As early as 1950, on Oct.21st., the *Daily Courier* carried an article titled 'City Scans Future of Glad Show.' It seems commercialism had taken over and become overburdening to a small group of growers.

So the Glad Show and festival passed into history. It was beautiful, and it was fun while it lasted. In the height of its glory there were thirty floats in the parade, five bands, riding groups and always the Cavemen dressed in their hides, carrying clubs and cavorting around.

Nowhere did my research tell how this new industry afforded employment for women after World War II and "Rosie the Riveter" was free again. There were women who held war-oriented jobs or even those who had not. Things changed and Mama got a job.

The last gladiolus festival was held in 1959. Local women who worked in the gladiolus industry are now in their 80s it seems.

M.K. Applegatia

Newsletter September 2000

Hope this finds everyone in good health and that you've had an enjoyable summer. Now people are busy putting up the harvest from their gardens and getting ready for the Fall. The Museum will be closing for the season soon. If you haven't had a chance to visit, you still have a little time.

Our Museum coordinator, Christina Parker, will be leaving us after this season is over. We will be looking for her replacement soon. We are sorry to loose her as she's done a good job. If you know someone that would be interested have them give me a call.

Our next meeting will be Saturday September 16th. at 10:00 AM at the Museum.

As of yet we haven't gotten the grass put in and there are a few other things that we hope to do before Winter sets in. All this takes time and when we are working with volunteers we need to adjust to their time schedules.

The next JCHMA meeting will be in Butte Falls on the 14th. at 10 AM. Myrtle and I have been representing AVHS at these meetings.

See you at the Museum on the **16th at 10 AM** with your lawn chair.

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